

# Kunapipi

---

Volume 26 | Issue 1

Article 9

---

2004

## Lapdance

Sharon Leach

Follow this and additional works at: <https://ro.uow.edu.au/kunapipi>



Part of the [Arts and Humanities Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Leach, Sharon, Lapdance, *Kunapipi*, 26(1), 2004.

Available at: <https://ro.uow.edu.au/kunapipi/vol26/iss1/9>

Research Online is the open access institutional repository for the University of Wollongong. For further information contact the UOW Library: [research-pubs@uow.edu.au](mailto:research-pubs@uow.edu.au)

---

## Lapdance

### Abstract

Listen, it's like some weird mating dance going on between me and this girl who's taking her clothes off for me. We're inside this strip club called Pussycats, a favourite haunt of mine. It's a dive on a seamy little street in the East Village that's cluttered with beauty supplies' stores, specialty sex shops, delis, dirty bodegas and shambling gray buildings that host wild rave parties by night, and crawling with black-eyeliner'd club rats, trannies in fake Prada and Gucci trying to hustle \$20-hand jobs on the corner, crack whores wanting like hell to hit the pipe and whacked-out bums jonesing for the next drink. It's a grim night, you know, the way Village nights can be, with the smell of piss, degradation and fucked-up dreams radiating off the walls of every old building. Heaven on frigging earth, right? Sometimes I wonder why I bother, and what the hell am I even doing here. But, what can you do?

SHARON LEACH

## Lapdance

Listen, it's like some weird mating dance going on between me and this girl who's taking her clothes off for me. We're inside this strip club called Pussycats, a favourite haunt of mine. It's a dive on a seamy little street in the East Village that's cluttered with beauty supplies' stores, specialty sex shops, delis, dirty bodegas and shambling gray buildings that host wild rave parties by night, and crawling with black-eyeliner'd club rats, trannies in fake Prada and Gucci trying to hustle \$20-hand jobs on the corner, crack whores wanting like hell to hit the pipe and whacked-out bums jonesing for the next drink. It's a grim night, you know, the way Village nights can be, with the smell of piss, degradation and fucked-up dreams radiating off the walls of every old building. Heaven on frigging earth, right? Sometimes I wonder why I bother, and what the hell am I even doing here. But, what can you do?

Anyway, so this chickie's new, not one of the regulars. Usually I get Cheyenne or Lotsa Lovin' or Freedom Chains. Those girls know me, know what I like and ain't got no problems giving it to me. I don't have to draw them a picture, if you get my meaning. I've been coming here for what, two years now. And, on account of the fact that they know I'm legit, I even get to touch them. But only barely though. You can never really tell the freaks just by looking, I suppose. But I ain't no freak. They know this and that's how come they let me get close.

So anyway, this new chick, Ambrosia, she's my dancer for tonight. I grin at her so she'll know I'm a nice guy. 'Nice name,' I say. 'Do you know it means "food of the gods"?'

She smiles and nods. I like that. Makes me feel good, you know? She's probably heard that same lame line hundreds of times from smartasses like me but she just acted like it was the first time. She's got this thing about her that just kills me. This quiet shyness or something. No shit. And then it strikes me: the thing that's different about this chick is that she doesn't act like she's just a slut. Maybe she's new at this sort of thing but you can see right away that she takes pride in her job. In a strange way, this really turns me on.

She loosens my tie, unbuttons my shirtsleeves. I'm thinking if this was one of those *Leave it to Beaver*-type TV shows, maybe she'd get my slippers and a newspaper too. This is new, but I'm liking the fact that she's treating me like a human being and not like some john who's paying her for favours.

Then she starts to dance to a slow groove. I'm nursing a scotch-and-soda and feeling mellow as hell. She puts her little finger in her mouth and sucks it while she's swinging her hips. She's petite, not curvy like the other girls. Her jet-black

hair is short, pixyish. Like a boy's. Normally I like long hair on a woman. You do a woman with short hair and it's like you're doing a guy, right? Hell, I'll say it again — I ain't no kind of queer. No, sir. But on this chick, the short hair is working.

She's dressed in this glittery little nightdress kind of number, low-cut and sexy. I can see the tops of her breasts. They aren't very big. But I can tell they're firm — a neat little handful. She has on mesh stockings and high heels. This girl has no markings like the other girls: no tats, no piercings, no nothing. At least, none I can see. Usually, I like tats on a girl. It makes them look like bad asses. But this girl, well, she's as pure as the driven snow. And all the while I'm watching her, thinking how she isn't really my type, but she sure is making me feel real good. Then slowly, slowly, she comes up to me kicking out her long legs like she's a can-can girl. Her black eyes are trained on me, deep and penetrating. I'm rock-hard and I'm trying hard to keep from jumping up and ramming myself into her.

So now she's standing directly before me. Her little pink tongue slides out over her bottom lip. It's almost like she's moving in slow motion when she puts up one of her legs and swings it over mine. Then she puts it back down again and smiles at me. It's like some weird foreplay parallel, I think, feeling myself getting angry. I don't have the patience for that shit.

I have this friend, a Yank named Charlie, who tells me that I'm a woman-hater. That's bullshit because I really dig chicks. Charlie's this pussified white dude who believes in all the New Age psychobabble about 'being in touch with his feminine side'. I mean, the guy thinks that by being a punk with women, he's somehow better than me. Duh, no shit. Man, that loser's my age and he's already engaged to this hot-shit fashion model who I know is going out on him. Poor sap. He's always asking me why I don't have any friends who're women. Why I screw every woman I know. I think Charlie is crazy if he doesn't try to hit all the women he knows. What else are they there for?

Once, I really tried to make him see things my way, though. I said to him, 'Hey, Charlie. Lighten up, man. Women are like an all-you-can-eat buffet'. But old Charlie just looked at me like I'd grown another head. Like I'd lost my mind or something. He's just fine with standing around in malls, holding his girlfriend's purse like a trained circus animal outside changing rooms of expensive clothes stores, while his manliness oozes through the door. Poor dumb-ass Charlie in his little faggotty Brooks' Brothers suits and Bruno Maglis. He'd never understand why I'm a player, why I'm the fucking man. He can't understand. How could I explain it to him? Hell if I even understand it myself.

Anyway, running along. Next thing I know this Ambrosia chick's straddling me and when she leans forward, I smell her sweet girly smell and I think I'm going out of my mind for her. She's looking at me with her dark eyes that are telling me a thousand ways that I can violate her and all I know is that the blood starts swooshing from my head, loud like a runaway train.

Out of the blue, I start thinking about my first real girlfriend, Yvette. Pronounced her name like *you-vette*. Ha, ha. You bet, Yvette. Yvette from New York. Skinny Yvette. Only skinny girl I ever been with.

The first time I saw Yvette was at an office picnic. I'd just started working at Morrison and Findlay, a debt financing company in Manhattan. I'd recently left Georgia, where my moms and I had first migrated to from Jamaica, and was new in town. It was my first job, entry-level, y'know, no big thing, but I'm not ashamed to say I saw myself moving up the totem pole real quick.

Then I met Yvette. The boss's daughter. Man, I was scared she'd get me fired. She started coming on to me and letting me know she was up for anything. She was sexy, too, though she looked like goddamned jailbait with her short-ass little pleated skirt, bobby socks and sneakers and blond hair tied in a ponytail. The girl was a walking wet dream, all bubblegum pink lips and creamy skin. Sweet piece of tail, you know. A regular little pom-pom type that you see in nudie magazines frolicking butt-ass naked with a bunch of other coeds getting some hot lesbo action.

I was sitting in a corner kind of by myself while some of the guys were playing scrimmage a ways away, because, as I said, I didn't know anybody yet. She walked over to me and scooped up some of my potato salad from off my plate with her finger. Just like that. Then she put it in my mouth. After the picnic, I went straight to her apartment. I stayed there all weekend.

But it soon got messed up because she wanted what every woman wants. The Big C. Commit-fucking-ment! So I had to let her go.

After that, I only made it with big girls. Big girls were just grateful that someone like me even gave them the time of day. They only want to walk the straight and narrow path with a man, they're scared shitless of losing him. Fat girls were cool, man. I figure what happens is this: they can't believe their luck when you pay attention to them. Check it. One time, I had this Spanish chick, Josephina. Really big, right? I guess she weighed about a ton. I ain't tripping. But she was pretty as hell, though. You know them Latin girls. Hair for miles and a space between her teeth that made me crazy. This girl was real, too, the first girl I'd met who showed an interest in doing it 'that way'. I decided to take her on a trip. I had some friends who had a place in the Hamptons so I told her we could stay there for a weekend. On the Friday that we were supposed to leave, I met this other chick that I wanted to give the business to. So I told Josephina that something had come up at my job and I gave her the key to the house and told her I'd meet her there. I didn't show up that weekend. I left the girl stranded. It wasn't one of my better moments, I will admit, and she was mad. I acted like a jerk-off but I wasn't about to apologise for nothing. So I said, Fuck that. But by the next weekend she was calling me up, sending me candy and begging me to come see her. Shit, I'd never got that kind of treatment from a woman before. I mean, for real, though, I had it made in the shade with a glass of lemonade.

So now I'm getting it on with this skinny Ambrosia chick and thinking about Yvette and Josephina and every girl I've made it with in the last couple of years, and I start to get excited, right? And I'm thinking that maybe this Ambrosia will come home with me. I mean, what the hey, right? It's been a while since I've had a woman in my bed; maybe this girl will come home with me. Why not? I'm a nice guy. Plus, it's payday. I've got money to burn.

Anyway, long story short: I guess I kind of forget that she's new and forget that there's a 'no-touching' policy here. And I'm thinking that maybe I'll sample the goods before I proposition her. But then two things happen. One: my fingers meet something lumpy where there shouldn't be. Two: Ambrosia lets out this hellcat scream that scares the snot out of me. What the hell?

I'm just trying to get my bearings from the shock, so I'm disoriented and slow. When her hand comes up to belt me one in the face, I'm caught off guard.

She jumps off me and is screaming for the muscle in this weird *male* voice. It dawns on me that she hadn't spoken a word to me all along. 'Hands! Hands!' she's going like some freaked-out retard, clutching her chest and trembling.

That's when I notice the faint shadow of an Adam's apple bobbing up and down in her throat. Shit. I swear I didn't notice it before. The bitch is a guy, a fairy! Frigging Queer Eye for this straight guy!

Then the door bursts open and sure as shit the Cavalry rushes in; the muscle named Smitty. 'What the hell is going on here?' he shouts, rushing in, looking from me to her.

He is a bald-headed black guy, huge like a wide receiver and just as mean-looking. The guy looks like he bench presses guys like me every day. He's holding a half-eaten burger in one hand, with a glob of mayonnaise at the corner of his fleshy mouth. There is a smudge of ketchup on his T-shirt which has the word FCUK printed on it. The shirt, which is way too tight, is stretched across his chest and looking like it's on life support. I almost laugh at how ridiculous he looks; but then I remember why I'm all p-o'd.

Smitty belches and the sound and stinky smell filter across the room. Right away I know he's got some serious gastrointestinal problems. He's an effing slob, if you want to know. Even so, you didn't want to mess with a guy like Smitty. I sure as hell didn't want to and I'm a big guy, myself. But what he had on me was density. Smitty was short and squat and looked like a mass of something — I don't know. A train wreck, perhaps.

'What the hell's going on?' he repeats, the burger shaking in his giant paw.

The Ambrosia chick is crying now and goes and stands behind him. 'He touched me,' she says in her weird man-woman voice, pointing shakily at me.

'Yeah, I touched her. Sue me!' I shout. But inside I'm Jell-O. I'm thinking, Man, I so don't want to get into it with Smitty.

Smitty looks at me, still clutching his burger. I can see he doesn't want to fight me. 'Hey, Jimmy,' he says quietly, taking a step toward me. 'You know the rules, man. No touching.'

I don't want to get the other girls in trouble by letting on that they make me touch them so I don't say anything about that. Instead I say, 'Yeah, but you guys are taking my money under false pretences here. I paid for a dance with a woman. Instead, I get some sick *Crying Game* crap here!'

By this time, some of the other girls have heard the commotion and are crowding at the door looking in and whispering.

'What you talking 'bout, Blood?' Smitty goes, looking suspiciously at Ambrosia.

Are you fucking kidding me? This Ambrosia is a closet queen and nobody knows!

'Just look under her dress!' I yell, feeling myself getting really p-o'd now.

Meanwhile Ambrosia is hysterical crying and looking around at everybody. I mean there's waterworks all over the place. Her mascara's running down her cheeks and the dumb bitch has got a snot bubble in her nose and everything.

I look at her and she looks back at me like she just found out I killed her cat. Like I'm the one that let her down. She's a real small dude, with small hands and wrists, and I can see how easy he can pass for a woman.

All this time Smitty's watching us. He's looking from me to her like a big dumb dog. A big dumb dog in a too-tight FCUK T-shirt. Like he doesn't know what to do. Meanwhile, the tension in the room is thick, like, you could cut it with a knife.

Then this Ambrosia she starts wringing her hands and talking about how she's doing this so she can save towards getting the other part of her operation. Her eyes are all wild and I can see that she's scared. But all I want to do is beat the hell out of her. I want to beat her to a bloody pulp. I could just take her little body and crush it with my bare hands, squeeze her throat till I see her eyes roll over in her head. And all of a sudden I feel blind white rage and see my Uncle Sonny inside my head, the way he looked before he died, laughing at me and telling me I'm a queer.

And I'm thinking, *I'm no faggot, man. I ain't no fucking faggot.*

That's when all hell breaks loose. I slip past Smitty and lunge for Ambrosia. Smitty grabs my hand and I think he breaks all the bones in it. He twists it behind my back. Ambrosia takes the opportunity to make a dive for the doorway, bawling like a banshee. Then the girls start running all over the place. It's like this really bad scene from a western, like a salon brawl gone bad.

Then something snaps inside me. I twist out of Smitty's grasp and take a bite out of his hand. Just like that. Like it's a big old hand sandwich. I hear my tooth loosen; it's a big bite. Then I take a swing at him.

That's how it is with me sometimes. I don't think things out all the way through. The minute I take that swing though, I know I've made a mistake. His face gets purplish and his cheeks sort of puff out and he makes this noise, like a tiger growling. I try to make a dash for the door but I'm too slow. Smitty charges after me, swearing and telling me I'm dead. He headbutts me and I feel like all

the lights go off or I've gone blind. Then Smitty is lifting me up off my feet, holding me at my nuts, and next thing I know is I'm in the air above his head and he's charging like a madman towards the back door.

The last thing I remember is sailing through the air before my skull connects with concrete.

Then it's darkness. Nothing.

Fade to black.

\*\*\*

In the dream, Uncle Sonny is looking down at me lying there on my back, and laughing. Fucking Uncle Sonny! I haven't thought about him in, like, a lifetime. But it's the same old Sonny. His front tooth has the same chip from the time we fell out of a tree at the back of my grandmother's house. I know it's a dream in the same vague, unreal way you know you're in the middle of a dream even though it seems so real. And this is for real, man. But it's a dream 'cause Sonny and me are kids again. He's twelve and I'm eight. We're like cousins, being so close in age and all. Like brothers.

So Sonny and me are here in this whacked-out concussed state. We're on the roof at my grandmother's house, a little one-room in a fucked-up part of town with a view of the city dump. When my old man ran out on my moms shortly after I was born, we moved in with her. That place could rival any of the projects and slums I've seen here in the States. All I know is once we got out on a plane and got the hell out of there we didn't look back. The houses there were so close you could smell when the neighbour took a shit. My mother was working for scraps as a cashier in a patty shop downtown. The manager was fooling around with her but she had to just grin and take his crap. As it was, she could hardly keep food in our mouths, let alone clothes on our back. Sometimes she couldn't even send me to school, which I didn't mind because I hated those dumb kids at school anyway. She couldn't get another job. No way could we have moved into a house of our own.

Those were some shitty days. Then my mother met the American and married him to get the green card. It was a long time ago but every now and again I think about those days. I don't remember a whole lot. I was young, just a kid. But I can't ever forget that house, Jack. It was real tiny, too. Even though there were only a few pieces of furniture — I remember a pea-green couch that was split with the stuffing overflowing, and a fold-up dining room table, a small fridge and a gas range — it always felt cluttered.

We used to love going up on my grandma's roof, Sonny and me, especially at night. The house had a slab roof so it got real hot real quick. We'd go up there with the hose and wet down the roof. Then we'd just sit there in our pyjamas feeling the air on our faces and listen to crickets and croaking lizards and shit and watch the smoke hovering like a film over the dump. Sometimes we'd sing songs. Songs we heard on the radio, but mostly songs we sang at church. We'd



just sit there singing and singing there to ourselves. Sonny's voice was good, too. I remember him singing: *In the sweet by and by we shall meet on that beautiful shore...* His voice was what I guess they'd call a tenor. It sounded like cold clear mountain water in a silver bucket. At least, that's what I thought of anytime I heard him sing. That's how good his voice was. He could have gone far with that talent, too. If we hadn't-a been so damn poor. And he always made me feel like my voice was as good as his, too. 'Sing up, Jimmy,' he'd say. That's what he'd say. But he was a liar, although I guess it was just his way of looking out for me.

Sonny didn't have any friends. On account of him being funny in the head, I guess. People said it was because my grandmother had him too late in life. He was almost twenty years younger than my moms. They said he was a retard. But he wasn't. He used to like that they thought he was an idiot. It was weird, but he did. I guess he wanted to be able to get away with stuff, you know?

Anyway, I didn't give a rat's ass about all the things they said. I mean if he didn't have a problem with it, then it would have been kind of stupid for me to, right? We were buds. Best buds. It didn't make no never-mind what the hell ignorant people said. They were always getting into our business, anyway. Always gossiping and spreading propaganda, as my grandmother would say. Dumb asses. Always saying things about Sonny to my grandmother. Now, how the hell are you going to criticise somebody's kinfolk to them? That's just plain ignorant. One thing the old lady always said: you have to ignore ignorance. She was right. Jamaican people were some of the small-mindedest people in the world. I know that as a fact cause I've met folks from all over. At least folks here in the States gossip about you but they have the sense to know to do it behind your damn back. They'll be dragging you through the mud while they're smiling at you and giving you apple pies over the fence.

So anyway, in the nights, Sonny and me would be up there on the roof, pretending we were kings and the stars in the sky were our kingdoms, our royal subjects, maybe, like in the storybooks. Whatever. I would always try to count them, the stars, I mean. Sonny would tell me that we couldn't, then I'd bet him he could. We'd start off real good though, 'til Sonny started calling out arbitrary numbers so I would get confused and forget where I'd reached. Then we would sort of just fall back and laugh like we were big old fools. Sonny was all right, man. He was goofy, but he was all right.

So in the dream we're in our pyjama bottoms on the roof, like we always were. Then, the weird shit happens. It's like some freaky deja-vu thing happens and I'm living out something that feels like it happened to me before. In the distance, smoke from the city dump is trailing up into the sky. We start counting stars. All I know is I'm counting stars and Sonny's calling out mixed-up random numbers trying to confuse me, you know, the way he'd always try to throw me off.

Stop, Sonny, I say and laugh.

But he doesn't stop. He just keeps on shouting out numbers while I'm counting. Then he leans over and starts tickling me. We start rolling around on the roof, shrieking with laughter. Sonny's tickling me so much I think I'm going to piss myself. But it feels good, that feeling that you get when somebody's tickling you relentlessly and you want them to stop and at the same time you kind of don't want them to.

Next thing is he's touching me. And he wasn't so all right anymore. I don't like it. I swear to God. It feels weird. It feels like something that's not supposed to happen. Something is wrong. I can feel it.

'Mama says no one's supposed to touch me, Sonny,' I say, feeling my mouth fill up with something bitter. I tell him. I tell him that. I tell him no, I know I do. But he only laughs.

'You're just a baby,' he says. His eyes are mean, meanest eyes I ever seen him with. Then he starts mimicking me. 'Mama says no one's supposed to touch me down there, Sonny.'

I feel like shit. The way I do when he double dares me to crawl over the Grahams' front gate at midnight and raid their mango tree and I know I can't because I'm afraid.

'Cry-cry baby,' he mocks.

'I'm not a baby,' I say. 'Take it back.'

'Make me,' Sonny says and shoves me. I can hear crickets chirping around us in the dark. The night has gone strangely cold. I can feel the hair on the back of my neck standing up.

Then I start to cry 'cause I hate it when Sonny doesn't love me. When my mom goes to work at night he stays with me. Sometimes he lets me play with his toy cars. I like that. I don't want him to get mad at me.

So I say, 'Okay'.

He smiles. I watch my thing grow and feel afraid.

But it feels good, too.

Now it's your turn, he says when he's through. He pulls down his sip. It makes a quick squeaky sound in the dark.

Sonny's thing is big; in the dark I see it's bigger than mine is.

When it's over he whispers, 'Good boy. This our little secret. You can't tell a soul, okay? Swear.'

And I swear. Because we're brothers. I never tell a soul.

\*\*\*

The next thing I know is I'm waking up in the alley in the back of the club, with blood coming from my mouth and a gash, somewhere on my forehead, that's burning like a motherfucker. The night carries the stink of some nearby dumpsters. The sky is black with a patch of orange shining through. The temperature has fallen a couple of degrees and it's chilly. I look down at myself and see that I'm still in my jacket but my tie's missing. I'm lying in a heap; one

of my legs is twisted in a kind of right angle and hurting like a son of a bitch, so I know it's probably broken. I can't move so I can't look at my watch, but it feels late, like maybe one, two in the morning.

There is a sudden movement somewhere in the distance and my heart starts to beat fast. I hold my breath. Maybe that cunt Smitty is coming back. But it's only a cat, scrounging around, sniffing an old take-out food box. It jumps down then stops frozen in its tracks to inspect me. In the darkness its animal eyes look like glass.

I try to sit up but I can't move. Smitty really tap-danced all over my ass but all I can think about is how everything's going to change after tonight. And I'm struggling, struggling, going under, man. The smell of rotting food from the nearest dumpster gets in my nose, in my throat, in my eyes. I swear to Christ I want to gag.

I don't know how long I stay like that; it could be hours, it could be minutes. I don't know. There's this long, dreamlike quality to the night. And anyway, time doesn't seem important now. It's like I'm going to have nothing but time on my hands from here on out.

The cat mews, still staring at me. It doesn't even consider running away, that's how much of a joke I guess I seem to it, lying there like that. 'Shoo,' I hiss at it, wishing I could get my fingers around its neck and squeeze. It scampers off and I close my eyes and settle back against the hard, cold concrete. I think about Sonny, still living in my grandmother's house thousands of miles away. I think about Ambrosia, trapped inside a body she didn't even want, wanting to be something she wasn't. And then I think about myself. What am I? I'm a joke. Everything in my fucked-up life has been a joke. A lie. And this is when the feeling of something crawling inside me starts — from my toes, up my legs, up my chest and over my heart, up, up — until not just every bone, but every tissue in my body hurts.

And then it hits me, whap! Right between the eyes. This is it right here, this is what it is. I got hard for a man.